

It's Pride Of Fleet In Miami

By JOHN ARNOLD
Herald Staff Writer

People in the crowd were jumping up and down singing, "Oh, Nor-way we lo-ove you." They cheered and waved Norwegian flags. Cars on the McArthur Causeway honked their horns. Miami's biggest ship was coming in.

The SS Norway, the largest ocean liner in the world, arrived in the Port of Miami Wednesday.

"Look at it. Oh my God. Look at it, the size of it," squealed Rosalyn Govia, a clerk in a freight forwarding company at the port. She waited on the dock, a Norwegian flag tucked in the front of her dress. She is in love with an engineer on the Norway, she said.

"It's beautiful, it's exciting," said Nancy Moody, a secretary at Southern Bell. She left work early and waited for four hours to watch the big liner tie up about 8 p.m.

The massive ship took up two piers, both 1 and 2 at Miami's cruise port.

NORWEGIAN Caribbean Lines executives waited nervously those four hours. Until about 40 minutes before the giant vessel started down the channel to nudge gently against the pier, there was doubt whether wind conditions would allow the big ship to dock.

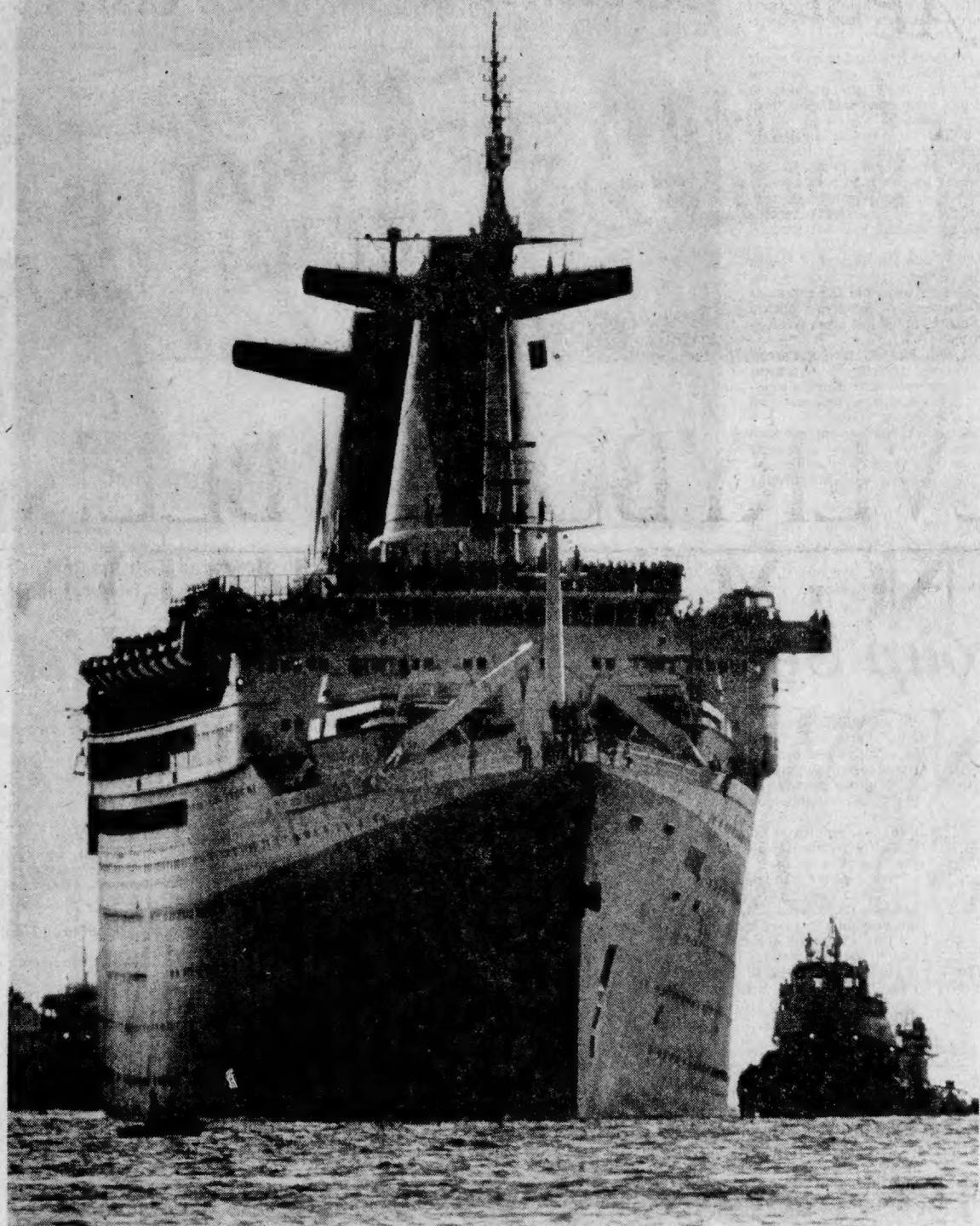
Winds up to 40 knots kept the giant liner waiting at the entrance to the channel off Miami Beach for about five hours after its arrival from New York. When the gusts subsided, the Norway headed in under its own power without assistance from tugboats. Special side thrusters can move the ship sideways at four knots.

An escort of Coast Guard vessels, yachts and harbor pilot boats bobbed alongside the enormous Norway. Tugboats shot plumes of spray from their firehoses. They tooted a welcome with their horns, and the Norway answered with a bellow so loud it startled the crowd of travel agents, cruise-line employees, port workers and others who had to come to watch from the pier.

Lisa Sheres, who works for Norwegian Caribbean Lines, looked out the 30th-floor windows of One Biscayne Tower about 12:30 p.m. Wednesday and saw the SS Norway headed for Miami. The world's largest ocean liner was off the coast of Hallandale at the time.

"THAT'S A very large ship," said

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— MURRY SILL / Miami Herald Staff

Towering Over Its Tug Escort, SS Norway Sails Into Government Cut

S.S. NORWAY



Picture the Orange Bowl. Then imagine it more than twice as long as it really is. Got it? What you have is the length of the SS Norway, the newest and largest cruise ship ever to sail into Dodge Island. Once the liner SS France, now converted for Caribbean cruises, the big Norwegian-Caribbean Lines ship came majestically into Government Cut shortly before 5 p.m. Wednesday. At windows lining the bay, the gawkers oohed and aahed — and dreamed of cruises yet to come.

Norway to Begin Cruises in June

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Sheres, who was gazing at the equivalent of a 70-story building lying on its side. Cruise-line employees rushed to the windows in awe of a ship so big it could be seen miles away in the ocean.

Norwegian Caribbean Lines (NCL), which has a \$110 million investment in the Norway, celebrated the liner's arrival with a champagne party for its 225 Miami office workers. The 2,000-passenger ship adds 70 per cent to the cruise line's passenger capacity and joins four other 750-passenger NCL ships cruising to Caribbean islands out of Miami.

As big as a floating Eiffel Tower, the 1,035-foot Norway halted offshore to await proper weather conditions for a grand entrance into the Port of Miami. Even sitting still, the Norway was majestic.

Tugboats and large yachts churned outward through 5- to 8-foot seas to take a look. Helicopters swooped around like gnats. And while the smaller boats bounced like corks in the rough sea the Norway sat as big and as solid as an island.

ED HOLBERT, NCL director of operations, waited anxiously on the dock for the Norway. He watched for the giant stacks of the ship, 16

stories high, to round the bend in the channel, the trickiest part of the vessel's docking maneuvers.

"She made it," he said. "Fantastic."

The liner was being maneuvered into port with a computerized system that allows the captain to steer the vessel with a small lever called a joystick. The joystick is slightly smaller than a gear shift on a sports car, he said. The days of the giant ship's wheel are over.

Sal Donato, an NCL consultant, said that among the special photographs the cruise line commissioned for a book on the Norway is one photo of Torbjorn Hauge, captain of the ship. "He's standing there with his hat on, his hand on the stick and a big grin on his face."

Before crossing the Atlantic, the giant vessel paused at a Norwegian fiord at Haugeson, Norway. The ship captain's family came aboard from the town named after Captain Hauge's ancestors.

THE NORWAY, formerly the SS France, was in mothballs in Le-Havre, France, for five years after being removed from its unprofitable trans-Atlantic run. NCL purchased the ship in 1979 for \$18 million and then ordered a \$65-million refitting in Bremerhaven, Germany, for Caribbean cruises.

It's now fitted with a laser-lighted disco, jacuzzi baths and luxury

suites, some costing up to \$2,500 for a weeklong voyage. About 900 passengers made the trans-Atlantic trip to New York, a stop on the way to Miami.

The ship left New York, May 17, with 1,250 workmen and crew applying finishing touches to the luxury liner during a slow trip down the coast. The Norway arrived in Miami six days early. And workmen will correct minor plumbing problems before the Norway becomes operational, NCL officials said.

NCL employees and guests will take the first cruise on the liner to Little San Salvador Island in the Bahamas May 30. The ship's first four so-called inaugural cruises in June are sold out, NCL officials said.

"I'm just glad she's here. This is the end result of a long dream that every NCL employee has had," said Holbert. "Fantastic," he said again.

Port of Miami officials estimate that adding the world's largest liner to the 22 cruise ships sailing out of Miami will add \$25 million a year to the local economy. One third of the world's cruise-ship fleet now sails from Miami.

"I'm ecstatic," said Port Director Carmen Lunetta. "This is the most beautiful thing I've seen happen to Dade County in years. After the week we've just had in Dade County, this is a beautiful thing to happen."